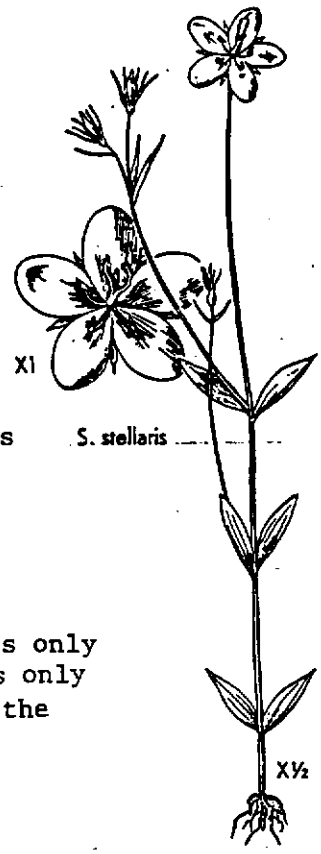
Massachusetts Natural Heritage Program

Natural Heritage & Endangered Species Program
Division of Fisheries & Wildlife
Route 135
Westborough, MA 01581
(508)792-7270, ext. 200

MASSACHUSETTS RARE AND ENDANGERED PLANTS

SEA PINK

(Sabatia stellaris Pursh)



Gleason, H.A. The New Britton and Brown Illustrated Flora of the Northeastern U.S. and Adjacent Canada. New York Botanical Garden, 1952.

DESCRIPTION

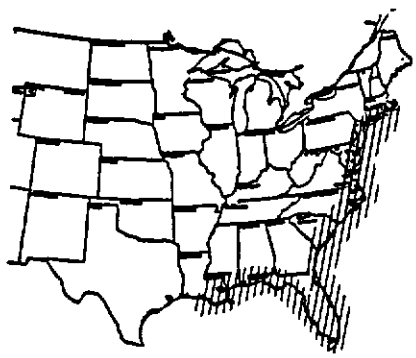
This herbaceous annual is a member of the Gentian family. Generally between 6 to 18 inches (15-45 cm.) tall throughout other parts of its range, Sea Pink populations appear somewhat stunted in Massachusetts (at the northern edge of its range) with plants reaching only about 8 inches (20 cm.) in height. Sabatia stellaris has a shallow tap-root and a solitary, four-angled stem with alternate branches. Light green leaves are opposite, linear-lanceolate, 1½ inches (3.8 cm.) long and lack any type of stalk. The five-petaled flowers, 3/4-1½ inches (2-3.8 cm.) wide, have a yellow center fringed with dark red. Sea Pink also has bright pink petals, yellow stamens and long, narrow sepals.

SIMILAR SPECIES IN MASSACHUSETTS

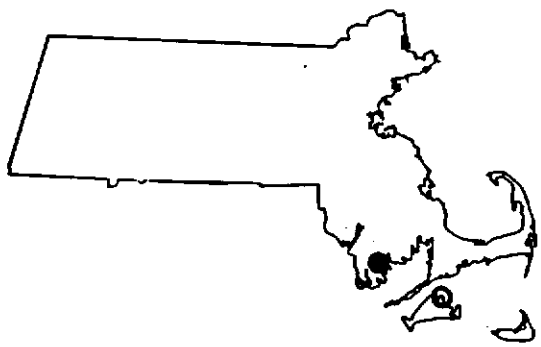
Southern Sabatia (Sabatia campanulata) resembles Sea Pink but is only found on freshwater pond shores. Although Southern Sabatia has only five petals, its sepals are usually longer than the petals and the leaves are skinnier and longer than those of Sea Pink.

HABITAT IN MASSACHUSETTS

This species occurs as patches of low plants in brackish or saline meadows and marshes above the level of daily tidal inundation. It is usually found growing in damp sandy or peaty soil. Sea Pink grows in association with marsh grass and low shrubs.



Distribution of Sea Pink



● Verified since 1978
○ Reported prior to 1978

Distribution in Massachusetts by Town

(continued overleaf)

1985

RANGE

Sabatia stellaris is distributed from southern Massachusetts south along the coast to parts of Florida and Louisiana. Also in inland Mexico.

POPULATION STATUS

Sea Pink is considered "Endangered" in Massachusetts. There is only one current (1978 to present) record and one historical occurrence reported. Reasons for rarity and potentially threatening factors include the location of the plant at the northern limit of its range and the possible loss of habitat due to permanent raising of the water level and/or increasing salinity.